

STATE CHILD DEATH REVIEW BOARD



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STATE CHILD DEATH REVIEW BOARD PROMOTES SUMMER WATER SAFETY

School is out and the summer's heat is upon us. Children all across Kansas will seek relief and enjoyment from swimming pools and other bodies of water. With this in mind, it is critical that parents and caregivers carefully supervise their children when near the water.

According to the SCDRB, 10 Kansas children died due to drowning in 2002. Of the 10 drowning fatalities reviewed by the SCDRB in 2002, 5 (50%) children drowned in pools; 2 (20%) drowned in bathtubs; and 3 (30%) drowned in creeks, rivers, ponds, or lakes. 2002 is the most recent year for which complete data are known.

There should always be an adult capable of responding to an emergency observing children around water. The adult should be actively watching and avoid distractions like reading and phone calls. Assigning swimming "buddies" is also a good idea, especially if there are many swimmers.

Supervision also applies to bathtubs, where children are often left alone for short periods of time.

Pools should have safety equipment available and be closed off from small children. Five foot fencing, completely encircling a pool or hot tub, with safety latch gates, is recommended. Specifically related to bathtubs, seats designed to hold a baby's head above water are absolutely no substitution for adult supervision. Also, there are cases where small children fall into buckets or toilets and drown. Caregivers should be on the lookout for these less obvious dangers.

Children should wear Personal Flotation Devices (PFDs) when participating in water activities. "Water wings" and other inflatable items are not adequate substitutes.

Children should have swimming lessons and water safety education. While this is vital, swimming ability alone doesn't relieve the need for adult supervision or PFDs. (The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends waiting until four years of age to begin lessons.)

The SCDRB is a multi-disciplinary, multi-agency board that examines the circumstances surrounding the deaths of all Kansas children (birth through 17 years of age) and children who are not Kansas residents, but who die in the state. The goals of the SCDRB are to describe the trends and patterns of child deaths in Kansas, to develop prevention strategies, and to improve sources of data and communication among agencies so that recommendations can be made. For additional information visit the SCDRB website at <http://www.ksag.org/Divisions/SCDRB/cdrb.htm> or contact Wayne Stith, Executive Director, at (785) 296-2215.